



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Note: This policy is designated for revision. The current policy contains many forms that have been designated obsolete and are no longer in use.

Introduction 5-9-86

While adoptive parents might come to the agency with parenting experience, many have not adopted a child and, therefore, might have no experience with CP&P, its governing laws, regulations, policies, practices or philosophy.

Every person who is approved as an adoptive parent should have adequate preparation for the inherent challenges of adoptive parenting, as well as information about CP&P, before a child is placed in his home. At the same time a child who requires adoption placement is entitled to the care which meets his unique needs. CP&P addresses both of these requirements through the adoption home study/approval process.

The adoption home study/approval process is a mutual selection process based upon information CP&P provides about its services and its needs for resources and an assessment by CP&P and the prospective family of the family's ability to integrate a child into their family structure on a permanent basis. This process provides an opportunity for the adoption home finder/trainer and applicant, in a mutual exchange of information, to assess whether the applicant can meet CP&P requirements and the special needs of a child placed for adoption without undue disruption to the family unit. The process includes an orientation session, pre-service training sessions and a home visit. The Adoption Home Study, CP&P Form [14-198](#), is divided into several sections which are incorporated into the modules of the pre-service training sessions.

The adoption home study process involves a specific pre-service training program for prospective adoptive parents which is approved by the Office of Training and Professional Development's Administrator and administered by CP&P prior to the final approval of the adoptive applicant. Other training may not be substituted for this mandatory program.

However, there may be circumstances when an individual study of a specific family for a specific child is the best, most efficient, most practical or most expedient method by which the needs of that child can be met. Individual studies can only be conducted with the approval of the Adoption Field Operations Supervisor. Adoptive applicants who are approved through the individual study method must be encouraged to attend the group pre-service training and must be advised that no other children will be placed in their home until they have successfully completed the pre-service training program.

The pre-service training may be conducted by an adoption home finder, a CP&P or a contracted trainer, an experienced adoptive parent, a birth parent, an adult adoptee, and other CP&P staff who have special expertise in a particular area. Training sessions may be jointly conducted by an adoption home finder and an experienced adoptive parent, calling upon others, as needed, to share and enrich the training. The Office of Training and professional Development is responsible for providing training for persons who conduct any part of the pre-service training curriculum. Flexibility in the location of the training site is necessary to accommodate the applicants and the trainers involved in the process.

Non-CP&P training volunteers may be reimbursed for their travel expenses.

The home study/approval process outlined in this section pertains to selected adoption homes. The process for resource home adoptions is outlined in [CP&P-IV-C-1-800](#).

CP&P Responsibilities 12-22-2003

CP&P has the responsibility to help prospective adoptive families assess:

- whether they meet or will be able to meet CP&P Standards for Selected Adoption Homes;
- the impact of adoptive placement on their family;
- the impact of placement on their relationships with other supportive systems, such as neighborhood, extended family, church, and school;
- their willingness and ability to incorporate into their family system a child who may have different religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, attitudes, values, and/or behaviors from their own family members;
- their willingness and ability to respect and encourage a child's religious and ethnic heritage;

- their willingness and ability to accept a child of a different race, color or national origin into their home;
- the type of child they are able and willing to adopt;
- their ability to fulfill the requirement of telling a child about his adoptive status;
- their willingness and ability to help a child with his ongoing need for information and understanding regarding his birth family;
- their willingness and ability to make a permanent commitment to a child through adoption;
- their ability to take risks and to solve problems;
- in cases of an “open” adoption, their willingness to accept a and work with the birth family; and
- their willingness to accept the possibility of negative consequences in “risk” placements.

Inquiry 12-17-91

The inquiry is the first contact that the prospective adoptive parent has with CP&P. The encounter is generally by letter, telephone, or personal contact at the Local Office. During the first contact, the screener/adoption home finder collects general information about the applicant and records it on the Inquiry Form, CP&P Form [14-158](#). The adoption home finder also outlines basic eligibility criteria, based on Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#), and discusses the type of children available for adoption and the various waiting periods involved. A written inquiry requires a response within three working days of receipt. The screener/adoption home finder telephones the applicant to obtain the information to complete the Inquiry Form.

If the applicant is considering a child for whom there will be a considerable waiting period (refer to the most recent memo regarding Priority of Adoption Homes to Be Studied, issued by the Central Office Adoption Unit) before the study process begins, the applicant is encouraged by the screener/home finder to complete an application and attend an orientation session. Applicants who attend orientation become more familiar with the agency and the adoption process, have a personal opportunity to ask questions of the home finder, and gain a clearer understanding of the kinds of children who are available for adoption.

Within five working days of the receipt of an inquiry, the applicant is sent an Adoptive Parents Inquiry Response letter, CP&P Form [14-192](#), which contains an invitation to an

orientation session; the Application for Adoption, CP&P Form [14-91](#); and general information regarding adoption. Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to return the completed application within two weeks. When an inquirer has expressed interest in a special needs child, there should be telephone follow-up if the completed application has not been received within 15 working days after being sent. Receipt of the application is acknowledged by means of the Adoptive Parenting Program letter, CP&P Form [14-193](#), which also serves to advise applicants of the types of children who presently are being studied and of those for whom study will be delayed for several years.

When prospective adoptive families move from an inactive status to ready-to-be studied status, they are sent an Invitation to Orientation letter, CP&P Form [14-194](#).

In many instances, it may be an applicant's first experience with our agency and he may be feeling anxious and/or apprehensive. It is important for the applicant to be treated with courtesy, consideration, and respect at this inquiry stage.

Agency employees and their family members may apply to adopt in accordance to the process outlined in Division Employees and Relatives of Employees as Adoptive Applicants, below.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Applicants 5-10-99

The Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) operates an interpreter referral service which can identify a certified interpreter for CP&P, who can assist CP&P with its study of a Deaf or hard of hearing applicant. The interpreter can help CP&P during the inquiry, orientation, training sessions, and the home visit(s). See [CP&P-II-C-3-100](#), [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#) and [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).

Blind and Visually Impaired Applicants 10-30-92

In the event that a blind or visually impaired person applies to be an adoptive parent, the Foster/Adoptive Parent Inquiry, CP&P Form [14-158](#), may be read to the applicant and completed by the screener/adoption home finder.

Any other document may be read or recorded and given to the applicant. Documents which require the signature of the applicant should be witnessed by a person chosen by the applicant. Contact Policy Development Unit for assistance, if necessary.

Orientation 10-30-92

An orientation session for prospective adoptive parents is conducted monthly, or as needed, by each Local Office. Local Office's may plan and conduct joint orientations with other offices to maximize training resources.

The purpose of the orientation session is to provide detailed information about eligibility criteria and standards for adoption services, pursuant to [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#). The resources needed by the agency, and the services available, based upon the characteristics of the children requiring placement, are emphasized. The Division's requirements regarding attendance at pre-service training, completion of all necessary forms and home visits are explained.

The adoptive parent applicant is advised that the addition of any person to the household must be brought to the attention of the adoption home finder so that a criminal history check and health review may be completed.

Before the conclusion of the orientation session adoptive applicants continuing in the study process are given a Release and Reference Packet with the request that this material be returned to CP&P within one week. Adoptive applicants who attend orientation but whose home study process will be delayed are not given a Release and Reference Packet at this time.

Applicants, who want to continue with the pre-service training and did not complete the Foster and Adoptive Home Study Application, are required to complete this form and return it to CP&P before the first pre-service training session.

The Release and Reference Packet contains:

- Criminal history forms, as outlined in Criminal History Investigation and Procedures Related to Adoptive Home Study/Approval Process.
- Medical Reference, CP&P Form [5-2c](#) for all adults and children in the household,
- Authorization for Release of Information, CP&P Form [26-15](#). Originals must be completed for each adult member of the applicant's household. An original or photocopy of this form will be mailed with the School/Day Care Reference, CP&P Form [5-2e](#); Employment Reference, CP&P Form [5-24](#); Child Care Reference, CP&P Form [14-202](#); and any mental health letters. All forms may be found in the Forms Manual.

The purpose of contacting references is to gain information, positive or negative, about the applicant so that a thorough assessment can be made to determine the applicant's ability to adequately and appropriately parent a child. The trainer provides the applicant with an explanation of the purpose of references and of each reference form.

Criminal History The purpose of the criminal checks is to learn of any convictions

concerning prospective adoptive parents and other adults in the household.

Personal	<p>The purpose of the personal reference is to discover how people in the community view the functioning of a prospective adoptive family.</p> <p>The personal reference forms are sent to three individuals designated by the applicant. At least one of the three references must be from the applicant's neighborhood community.</p>
School/Day Care	<p>The purpose of the school/day care reference is to determine the adjustment of any birth children in school day care and the role taken by the parents in their children's education.</p>
Employment	<p>The purpose of the employment reference is to indicate the stability and reliability of the applicant.</p>
Child Care	<p>The purpose of the child care reference is to obtain information regarding the applicant's ability as a caregiver. This reference is required if:</p> <p>(1) There are children in the home who were placed through other agencies or other units of CP&P. The family must receive a positive recommendation in writing from the supervising agency and/or unit of CP&P before the home is approved for an additional child.</p> <p>(2) There are any entries on the Foster and Adoptive Home Study Application in the block which "reads Have you ever or do you now provide any of the following services to individuals privately, through CP&P or any other agency?" A child care reference letter must be sent to all individuals or agencies named.</p>
Medical	<p>The purpose of the medical report is to ascertain the physical and emotional health of the adoptive parents and other members of the household (adults and children). A Medical Reference, CP&P Form 5-2c, must be completed by the physician of the family's choice prior to approval of the adoptive home. See Reimbursement for Medical Examination of Foster Parent Applicants in CP&P-IV-B-2-150.</p>

Mental Health Applicants with a history of drug/alcohol abuse or mental/emotional problems must receive a positive recommendation from their current and/or prior therapist/counselor. There is no form letter for this reference.

With the exception of criminal history checks and medical reports, all reference requests will be sent after the applicant has completed the second pre-service training session. The reference responses are confidential and are placed in the applicant's file in the Local Office.

The trainer explains that the purpose of the Adoption Home Study, CP&P Form [14-198](#), is to help CP&P evaluate the abilities of families to provide adequate adoptive care and also to help families assess their own capabilities. The Adoption Home Study is a working document that is completed by the applicant during the course of training. It is separated into sections to correspond with the various training modules. At the conclusion of a training session, an applicant will be given the Adoption Home Study section for the next training module.

It is important for applicants to complete the application and Adoption Home Study forms as much as possible utilizing family members, neighbors and other community resources without the assistance of CP&P staff. The mutual selection process is designed to assess the applicant's ability to solve problems by drawing upon family members and other resources. While some applicants may have minimal reading and writing skills, it is important to know that a child placed in such a home will be parented by people who have other resources to help them in dealing with written material. It is the responsibility of CP&P to ensure that children placed in an adoptive home have access to individuals who will be able to help and encourage them to develop the reading and writing skills which are vital in meeting the demands of adult life.

Adoption Home Record 10-30-92

The adoption home finder develops an adoption home record for each family. The adoption home record includes, but is not limited to:

- a Resource Family Parent Home Study/Licensing Application, CP&P Form [5-2](#);
- the Adoption Home Study (three sections), CP&P Form [14-198](#), completed by the applicants and, when appropriate, their children;
- the Adoptive Home Summary Outline, CP&P Form [14-198a](#);

- copies of the Authorization for Release of Information, CP&P Form [26-15](#);
- an Employment Reference, CP&P Form [5-24](#), for each employed applicant;
- a School/Day Care Reference, CP&P Form [5-2e](#), for each child in the household;
- criminal history forms for all adults in the home;
- Child Care Reference, CP&P Form [14-202](#), as appropriate;
- Adult's Medical Report, CP&P Form [14-87](#), for each adult member of the household;
- Child's Medical Report, CP&P Form [14-196](#), for each child in the household;
- statement from practitioner regarding mental health or substance abuse, when appropriate;
- copies of all correspondence with and about the applicant;
- a copy of the Adoption Home Approval Letter, CP&P Form [14-199](#), or a copy of the Non-approval for Adoption Care, CP&P Form [14-200](#), as appropriate.

All reference responses are confidential.

Home Visit 5-31-91

Prior to the adoption home finder's visit to the prospective adoptive home, the applicant completes the Foster and Adoptive Home Study Application, the Adoption Home Study and the training sessions. However, a home visit can be made before or during the course of training, if the situation warrants it. A maximum of two home visits are scheduled. If more than two home visits are felt to be necessary, the family may not be ready to adopt at this time. There is sufficient time during a minimum of 10 hours of pre-service training and two home visits to judge the applicant's ability to care for a child.

The home visits are critical in addressing concerns and reconciling inconsistencies between information submitted in the application and Adoption Home Study and information gathered during pre-service training sessions.

The home visit also is the time to verify information on the application regarding each household member's name by checking a birth certificate or driver's license. Marriage/civil union partnership, divorce/dissolution of civil union, death or adoption information must be verified. See [CP&P-III-C-6-100](#). Previous names are checked through ALFX to determine whether there are any child abuse reports on any adult household members. See Full Record Review, below, for specific instructions.

All members of the household who have not participated in pre-service training sessions and both prospective adoptive parents must be present at the home visit. The home finder uses the home visit to further discuss the type of child acceptable and the impact of adoption, particularly the requirements of a special needs child, on the family.

It is expected that the home study process will provide an opportunity for the home finder to get to know the applicant sufficiently to adequately assess his motivation and commitment to adoption. In situations where this has not occurred by the completion of the group sessions, the applicant is seen in an individual personal interview in an effort to secure the needed information. In cases where a serious question arises regarding an applicant during pre-service training or as a result of reference material received, an individual or joint interview should be scheduled as soon as possible to deal with and resolve the area of concern. Individual personal interviews can take place during a home visit, at the office, or at any other convenient meeting place.

The Adoption Home Study sections completed by the children in the family are a useful basis for discussions with the children and parents about the impact of an adoptive child on family relationships.

While observing the family in its environment, the home finder examines the house and its surrounding property to ensure that it meets the Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, and is a safe setting for a child. Use the Checklist of Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, CP&P Form [14-201](#). The home visit is also an opportunity to discuss any questions the applicants may have about the Adoption Home Study sections, which were not covered in the group sessions as well as general adoption questions or issues that are unique to the specific adoptive applicant.

Criminal History Investigation 11-19-2012

In order to safeguard the welfare of New Jersey children placed for adoption, State law requires that CP&P conduct a state and federal criminal history check of each person

applying to be an adoptive parent, and of each adult member of the applicant's home. Two of the checks are conducted based upon fingerprints. The criminal history check provides CP&P with information to make informed decisions concerning all prospective adoptive parents and members of their household. The investigation must be done prior to any adoption placement.

All requests for criminal history checks are sent to the DCF LiveScan Liaison, CC #933, the DCF liaison for all external criminal history information requested from the F.B.I. and the State Bureau of Identification.

State and Federal checks are mandatory according to State law. If any person objects to a criminal history inquiry being made, inform him or her that the home study will not be completed until the check is conducted.

The fingerprints should be taken, if possible, before pre-service training begins or at the first training session, if this can be arranged, in order to provide sufficient time for the checks to be completed.

The CP&P worker may use CP&P Form [5-25](#), Police Reference, to obtain a municipal police check on an adoptive applicant. This check may provide information not available from the state or federal check. Since completion of the request is done at the discretion of the local police department, the check is not required. However, the check is required when the local police department is known to be cooperative.

The DCF LiveScan Liaison may be consulted with regard to questions/concerns about local, state, or federal police checks.

While the purpose of this procedure is to gain information, Departmental Administrative Order 2:01 and professional ethics require that any information obtained be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Criminal history information may not be released by CP&P to anyone without the signed consent of the person or without a court order.

The criminal history investigation must be completed prior to placement of a child in an adoptive home. The CHRI background check is valid for 12 months in accordance with N.J.A.C. 10:121A-5.6(m). If a criminal history is revealed but the adoption worker believes the applicant is appropriate to parent despite this, a Special Approval Request, CP&P Form [16-76](#), is sent to the CP&P Director requesting approval to proceed with the family. When a criminal history report is more than one year old and the adoptive home is being considered for placement of a child, new prints must be completed, if the fingerprints have not been archived by MorphoTrak. The report from the State Police, which is generally obtained within 48 hours, must be received by the Worker before placement can occur.

If the adoption worker has any knowledge that causes concerns about a family's possible criminal activity, particularly outside the State of New Jersey, the family should be re-fingerprinted and a new criminal history report obtained prior to placement of a child in the home.

Full Record Review 4-1-2013

CP&P reviews its records to determine whether there is information available to aid in determining the applicant's ability to care for children. This review must take place before the applicant is scheduled for training. Using the name and birth date of each child and adult, the adoption home finder checks the following for all adults and children in the home:

- ALFX;
- NJ SPIRIT, see [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#);
- Companion case records related to the above.

ALFX is an alphabetical listing of all County Welfare Agency and CP&P cases. They are listed by CWA and NJS case identification numbers. If the family has an ID number, that number is used to check and locate the records in NJS. Records are read for all children and adults living in the home.

When the NJS inquiry indicates that the applicant or household member is known to CP&P or IAIU through a Substantiated or an Established institutional abuse/neglect incident that is not under appeal, the Home/finder consults the CP&P Worker or the Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) to determine the nature and severity of the abuse/neglect.

All information in the record is taken into consideration in determining the ability of the applicant to care for children.

Adoptive Home Study Dispositions 3-4-94

Assessment and evaluation of the applicant is done by the home finder in consultation with his/her immediate supervisor.

Approval 3-4-94

Approval as an adoptive parent is contingent upon the completion of the study/training process and meeting CP&P Standards for Selected Adoption Homes. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#). All references, criminal history checks, medical reports, and required forms must be obtained prior to approval.

If the recommendation made by CP&P for type of child acceptable differs from the type of child the applicant has requested, the home finder discusses the recommendation and the reasons for it with the applicant at the time of approval. See Disagreement with the CP&P Decision.

When the home study process is completed and the applicant is accepted as an adoptive parent, the family is sent an Adoption Home Approval letter, CP&P Form [14-199](#).

Provisional Approval 5-14-2001

Provisional approval of an adoptive home is no longer permitted. In March of 1999 an amendment to state law eliminated the provisional approval of adoption homes pending federal criminal history results.

Withdrawal 6-26-91

Withdrawal from the adoption parenting program may occur at any time during the home study process. Withdrawal may be initiated at the applicant's request, or when the applicant has been given adequate time to participate in the study process and has failed to respond to at least two invitations to attend group training sessions, or when, through the course of the mutual selection process, it does not seem in the best interest of the applicant and/or the agency for the applicant to continue.

When an application is withdrawn, enter a written explanatory statement in the home record. Indicate that the application was withdrawn at the suggestion of CP&P, if appropriate. Send a confirming letter about the withdrawal to the applicants.

Rejection 5-14-2001

The Division shall not deny an individual the opportunity to become an adoptive parent based on the individual's race, color, national origin or ethnicity.

In addition, the Division shall not deny an adult the opportunity to become an adoptive parent based solely on the applicant's sex, disability, marital/civil union status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#), Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, for a discussion of legal age requirements and consideration of a child's age prior to placement.

Rejection may occur at any time during the study process and consists of a personal interview to discuss the reasons for rejection which are based upon an assessment against the Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, observation of the applicants during the home study group process, the home visits and responses from the applicants on the Adoption Home Study. The applicant is also informed during the personal interview that he or she may request a review of the decision if he or she disagrees with the decision. See Disagreement with the CP&P Decision. A Non-approval for Adoption Care letter, CP&P Form [14-200](#), which reiterates the reason(s) for rejection based upon the standards for adoption homes and informs the applicant of dispute resolution opportunities is signed by the home finder and his supervisor and is sent to the applicants within one week following the personal interview. When the reasons for rejection cannot be shared with the applicants due to confidentiality restrictions, the applicants are informed of this fact and the reasons are not shared.

Rejection on the Basis of Criminal History (CHRI) 5-14-2001

Rejection must occur when any one or more adult members in the household:

- has been convicted of a crime listed in N.J.S.A. 30:4C-26.8 (amended effective March 31, 1999) that automatically disqualifies, as described in [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#); or
- has been convicted of a lesser crime listed in N.J.S.A 30:4C-26.8, as described in [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#), but five years has not passed since the date of release from confinement, parole or probation and the date of application to adopt a child.

An applicant need not be rejected automatically if he or an adult member of the household has a criminal record other than that described above. When an applicant or adult member of the household has been convicted of a crime, this is discussed with the applicant. All information must be evaluated in relation to the ability of the applicant to care for, protect, and influence a child. For policy regarding the procedure to request adult probation records from the Probation Services Division, see [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), Procedures to Request Adult Probation Records.

The standards for approving an applicant with a criminal conviction of a person living in his or her household are as follows:

- the offense committed is not one that automatically disqualifies under N.J.S.A. 30:4C-26.8 or is not listed at all in N.J.S.A. 30:4C-26.8. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-250](#); or

- the offense is one that requires a five year interim between the date of release from confinement, parole or probation and the application to adopt under N.J.S.A. 30:4C-26.8, and that time period has passed; and
- after a careful review of the circumstances of the offense committed, including
 - verification of all identifying information,
 - the perpetrator's age at the time of the crime,
 - whether the crime was an isolated incident or repeated incidents of criminal activity,
 - an examination of the nature and/or seriousness of the crime, and
 - written documentation and any other evidence of the perpetrator's rehabilitation, the Worker and Supervisor determine that the offender poses no risk to children or other family members; and
- the CP&P Director gives written approval.

Seek approval of the CP&P Director by submitting a Special Approval Request, CP&P Form [16-76](#) and supporting attachments through the chain of command. Final approval of this Special Approval Request rests with the CP&P Director. See the CP&P Form [16-76](#) form instructions for specific policy and procedures.

Rejection on the Basis of Child Abuse Record Information (CARI) 4-1-2013

CP&P does not approve an applicant as an adoptive parent under any circumstances when CP&P records indicate a finding that the applicant or adult household member has:

- caused the death of a child through abuse or neglect;
- caused serious injury or harm to a child through abuse or neglect; or
- sexually abused a child.

An applicant with a finding of Substantiated or Established child abuse or neglect, other than those referenced above, by the adoptive applicant or a member of the household, is considered for approval only upon the recommendation of the Local Office Manager

and the approval of the CP&P Director. If the applicant or other person living in the applicant's home has been involved in an incident as described below, where there are mitigating circumstances surrounding questionable behavior regarding the care of children, the applicant may be considered for approval. Some situations which may warrant further consideration include:

- a situation where the perpetrator of the abuse or the neglect has left the home and the other family members have taken adequate precautions to safeguard against further incidents of abuse or neglect;
- the abuse or neglect has occurred in the past and the field office is convinced that circumstances, time, or therapeutic intervention has ameliorated the problems precipitating the incident;
- an isolated incident of abuse or neglect that was "situational" and not reflective of the family's normal child care practices, such as a parent leaving one child unattended in order to attend to an emergency with another child; or
- a minor incident that was miscoded or one wherein the limited choice of coding possibilities inaccurately reflected the severity of the incident or the mitigating factors surrounding the incident. Note: The Four-Tier Finding Determination Model is intended to address these gray area situations. See [CP&P-II-C-6-100](#), CPS Investigation Finding Determinations - Four (4) Tier Findings.

The recommendation for approval is submitted via the Special Approval Request, CP&P Form [16-76](#), to the CP&P Director.

A written explanation is entered into the applicant's adoption home record.

Disagreement with the CP&P Decision 6-26-91

If the applicant disagrees with the decision to disapprove the home or disagrees with any special condition(s) established by CP&P with respect to the approval and use of the home, the applicant may request that the disposition be reviewed by the LO Manager. Within one month of the applicants' request, a final determination is sent in writing citing the reasons for disapproval based upon the standards for adoptive homes to the applicant by the Deputy Director based upon a summary and recommendation submitted by the Local Office Manager.

When the final determination confirms the rejection of an applicant, a copy of the letter to the applicant with the supporting Local Office documentation is forwarded to the CP&P Director for information purposes only.

Changes in Household Composition 6-26-91

It is not uncommon for applicants to undergo changes in their household composition subsequent to their initial application to adopt and prior to the actual placement of a child in their home by CP&P.

When the family size changes by the addition of another child through birth, adoption or other source of placement, family dynamics necessarily change. It is incumbent upon the Division to allow the family sufficient time to adjust to the changes before a fair assessment of the desirability of placing a child in that home for adoption can be made. Therefore, a home study will not be initiated until the child who has already entered the home has been there for one year. If the family has already been approved, the Local Office will re-evaluate the family one year after the placement of the child who had already entered the home and assess the family's continuing adoption interest and suitability at that time.

If the household composition changes subsequent to the approval of an application and prior to the placement of a child for adoption by the addition of another adult or departure of an individual, the Local Office evaluates the impact of the change on the family equilibrium. The family may need some time to readjust or reconsider their adoption interests and capabilities. The amount of time necessary for those considerations is determined by the family and the home finder and may depend upon the reasons for the family composition change. No child shall be placed with the family, however, without a completed medical report and criminal history check on the additional adult.

In all cases where there has been a change in family composition by the addition or departure of a child or an adult, the applicants will retain their initial application date.

Division Employees and Relatives of Employees as Adoptive Applicants 6-26-91

Agency employees and their family members may apply to adopt a child through CP&P and their application will be processed in accordance with the current guidelines established for all applicants. An employee relative is defined as any one of the following individuals who is related to the employee by blood, half-blood, adoption or marriage/civil union partnership: father; mother; son; daughter; brother; sister; stepparent; stepbrother; stepsister; uncle; aunt; first cousin; niece; or nephew. After an employee's home or that of a family member has been approved as an adoptive home, the Director's approval is required when the employee's home or that of the family

member is selected for the placement of a child. The CP&P Director reviews the selection to ensure that no preferential treatment is afforded the employee or the family member over that of other approved adoptive families. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-100](#) for a discussion of the selection process.

All applications will be studied according to the type of child the applicant is requesting.

- Applicants requesting children without significant problems will be studied according to the date of their application.
- Applicants requesting hard-to-place children will be studied according to the Priority for Adoption Home Studies issued quarterly by CP&P's Office of Adoption Operations.

The home study and subsequent supervision of the adoption placement will be assigned to staff who do not have intimate knowledge of or personal contact with the employee requesting adoption. If this cannot be accomplished within the Local Office covering the area in which the employee lives, arrangements will be made for assignment to another Local Office. In all cases of application for adoption from a staff member of one of the Local Offices, arrangements will be made for the home study and supervision to be done by another region.

The adoption home record of the employee or the relative of an employee will be kept from the open file and placed in a protected file in order to safeguard the confidentiality of the applicant.

Upon approval of a home study of an employee or a member of his family, consideration for selection will be handled by the Office of Adoption Operations in the same manner as any other approved applicant. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-100](#).

Selection of the home of an employee or relative of an employee of an Local Office will generally not be made for a child supervised by that same Local Office. Although the selection procedure should allow such a selection to be made without conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict occurring, it could put the Local Office staff in a difficult position in situations where they perceive some reason for not proceeding with the placement. In addition, such a selection would create difficulty in maintaining confidentiality of the home study related to the employee or his relative.

However, if the CP&P employee or relative of an employee is the most appropriate placement for a child from the same region, the CP&P Director can approve the selection. It is then incumbent upon the LO Manager and the Adoption Field Operations Supervisor to assure that adequate precautions are taken in the management of the

case to safeguard confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest.

Procedures Related to Adoptive Home Study/Approval Process

4-11-2005

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Screeners/Adopt. Home Finder	1. Complete Inquiry Form, CP&P Form 14-158 .
Clerical	2. Register inquiry in inquiry log on the day it is received. 3. Enter in inquiry log all Inquiry Forms received from the worker at the toll free 800 recruitment number.
Home Finder/Clerical	4. Schedule applicant for an orientation session by sending an Adoptive Parents Inquiry Response letter, CP&P Form 14-192 . Include the Application for Adoption, CP&P Form 14-91 , and general information regarding adoption. (Time frame: within five working days from day of inquiry).
Screeners/Home Finder	5. Follow up by telephone if a completed application form from an applicant willing to accept a hard-to-place child is not received by CP&P within 15 working days after being sent.
Prospective Adoptive Parent	6. Complete the Application for Adoption and return prior to or at the orientation session.
Home Finder/Clerical	7. Mail applicant an Adoptive Parenting Program letter, CP&P Form 14-193 , upon receipt of application.
Home/finding Supervisor	8. Review application. 9. Put in an inactive status those applicants who choose a child without significant problems, pending a notice from the Central Adoption Unit to begin

	<p>the home study process.</p> <p>10. Put into an active status those applicants who are to begin the home study process. Include previously inactive applicants when informed by the Central Office Adoption Unit that home studies for them may begin.</p> <p>11. Assign applicant to home finder who will be providing the pre-service training.</p>
Home Finder	<p>12. Send an Invitation to Orientation letter, CP&P Form 14-194, to those applicants who have been in an inactive status and are now to begin the home study process.</p> <p>13. Use information from the Foster and Adoptive Home Study Application to conduct a Full Record Review (including NJ SPIRIT inquiry and review of any companion case records, if applicable), to determine if applicants, their children, or other household members are known to CP&P or IAIU.</p>
Prospective Adoptive Parent	<p>14. Attend the orientation session.</p>
Home Finder	<p>15. Conduct orientation. Give the prospective adoptive parent an overview of CP&P as well as detailed information about eligibility criteria/adoption standards.</p> <p>16. Give the Release and Reference Packet to applicants who will be continuing in the home study process with the request that this material be completed and returned to CP&P within one week.</p> <p>17. Advise the applicants that they are responsible for attending a minimum of ten hours of pre-</p>

	service training.
Prospective Adoptive Parent	18. Complete all material in the Release and Reference Packet and return to CP&P within one week.
Home Finder	<p>19. Schedule the pre-service training and send applicant an Invitation to Pre-Service Training, CP&P Form 14-197. Criminal history checks should be completed or in process.</p> <p>20. Conduct mandatory pre-service training for prospective applicants.</p> <p>21. Give applicants the Adoption Home Study section for the next scheduled training module at the conclusion of each training session.</p> <p>22. Mail all reference forms concerning the applicants after they have completed the second pre-service training session.</p> <p>23. Contact by telephone or letter those applicants who fail to attend a training session. Encourage them to continue the training by informing them that missed sessions may be made up during the next training series.</p>
Prospective Adoptive Parent	<p>24. Complete each Adoption Home Study section prior to the corresponding training module, and bring to the training session.</p> <p>25. Attend all pre-service training.</p>
Home Finder	<p>26. Construct an adoption home record for each applicant, as outlined in Adoption Home Record.</p> <p>27. Schedule and conduct</p>

	<p>necessary home visits and personal interviews.</p> <p>28. Evaluate the home using the Standards for Selected Adoption Homes and the Checklist of Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, CP&P Form 14-201.</p> <p>29. Prepare written assessment of the adoptive applicant according to the Adoptive Home Summary Outline, CP&P Form 14-198a.</p>
Home Finder and Supervisor	<p>30. Evaluate and approve or disapprove applicant for adoption care.</p>
Home Finder	<p>31. Send Adoption Home Approval letter, CP&P Form 14-199, to the applicants if they are approved.</p> <p>32. Discuss in a personal interview with applicants, the reason(s) for rejection if they are not approved, and advise the applicants that they may request a review of the disposition by the LO Manager.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Non-approval can occur at any time during the home study process.</p> <p>33. Document in the applicant's adoption home record the reasons given during the interview for the application not being approved, when the disposition is rejection.</p> <p>34. Send a Non-approval for Adoption Care letter, CP&P Form 14-200, within one week of the interview if application is not approved, restating the reasons for rejection based upon adoption home standards and giving the applicants notice that they may request a review</p>

	of the disposition by the LO Manager. Indicate to the applicant, when appropriate, that the reasons for rejection are governed by confidentiality restrictions.
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Procedures Related to Employees as Adoptive Applicants 6-26-91

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Finder Screener/Adoption Home	1. Complete Inquiry Form, CP&P Form 14-158 .
Clerical	2. Register inquiry in inquiry log on the day it is received.
Employee and LO Manager	3. Discuss and decide which LO should conduct the pre-service training. If an individual study is the most appropriate procedure for completing the study, approval must be obtained from the Adoption Field Operations Supervisor according to Procedures Related to Individual Home Studies.
LO Manager	4. Make arrangements within the region or with an alternate region for the employee to participate in an orientation meeting and then, as appropriate, in pre-service training or individual study. 5. Alert the employee of the arrangements.
Home Finder	6. Invite employee to orientation meeting and pre-service training, if appropriate, or schedule appointment to begin individual home study. Proceed as with any other adoptive applicant.
Employee	7. Comply with all the standards outlined in CP&P-IV-C-10-250 and CP&P Form 14-201 . 8. Complete each Adoption Home Study section and attend all pre-service training, as appropriate.

Home Finder	<p>9. Construct an adoption home record for the employee as outlined in Adoption Home Record, taking such precautions as necessary or directed by the LO Manager to insure confidentiality.</p> <p>10. Schedule and conduct necessary home visits and personal interviews.</p> <p>11. Evaluate the home using the Standards for Selected Adoption Homes and the Checklist of Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, CP&P Form 14-201.</p>
Home Finder and Supervisor	<p>12. Evaluate and approve or disapprove applicant for adoption care.</p>
Home Finder	<p>13. Send Adoption Home Approval letter, CP&P Form 14-199, to the applicants if they are approved. A carbon of the approval letter should be sent to the CP&P Director.</p> <p>14. Discuss in a personal interview with applicants, the reason(s) for rejection if they are not approved and advise the applicants that they may request a review of the disposition by the LO Manager. Note: Non-approval can occur at any time during the home study process.</p> <p>15. Document in the applicant's adoption home record the reasons given during the interview for the application not being approved.</p>
Home Finder/Supervisor	<p>16. Send a Non-approval for Adoption Care letter, CP&P Form 14-200, within one week of the interview if application is not approved, citing the reasons based upon adoption home standards and giving the applicants notice that they may request a review of the disposition by the LO Manager.</p>

Procedures Related to Individual Home Studies 2-19-2011

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Worker or Home Finder	1. Send request to the Adoption Field Office Supervisor via LO Manager requesting approval to study an applicant on an individual basis.
Adoption Field Office Supervisor	2. Evaluate and approve or disapprove the request within 10 days and alert the appropriate LO Manager(s).
LO Manager	3. Consult with supervisor to select appropriate home finder to conduct the individual study, if approved.
Supervisor	4. Assign individual home study. 5. Conference with home finder to insure that information from pre-service training modules and Adoption Home Study is completed as appropriate.
Prospective Adoptive	6. Complete the Foster and Adoption Home Study Application and return prior to first interview.
Home Finder	7. Check ALFX, NJS windows and companion records and Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit records, if applicable, to determine if applicants or their children have been known to CP&P. Check NJS for adults who may be vendors. 8. Provide client with background information on CP&P. 9. Give prospective adoptive parent the Release and Reference Packet at the first meeting and request that this material be completed and returned to

	CP&P within one week.
Prospective Adoptive Parent	10. Complete all material in the Release and Reference Packet and return to CP&P within one week.
Home Finder	11. Conduct individual pre-service training for prospective applicants. 12. Give applicants the Adoption Home Study section for the next scheduled training module at the conclusion of each training session. 13. Mail all reference forms concerning the applicants as soon as possible.
Prospective Adoptive Parent	14. Complete each Adoption Home Study section prior to the corresponding training module, and bring to the training session. 15. Cooperate with all scheduled appointments.
Home Finder	16. Construct an adoption home record for each applicant, as outlined in Adoption Home Records. 17. Evaluate the home using the Standards for Selected Adoption Homes and the Checklist of Standards for Selected Adoption Homes, CP&P Form 14-201.
Home Finder and Supervisor	18. Prepare written assessment of the adoptive applicant according to the Adoptive Home Summary Outline, CP&P Form 14-198a. 19. Evaluate and approve or disapprove applicants for adoption care.
Home Finder	20. Send Adoption Home Approval letter, CP&P Form 14-199, to the applicants, if they are approved. 21. Discuss in a personal interview

	<p>with applicants the reason(s) for rejection based upon adoption home standards, if they are not approved, and advise the applicants that they may request a review of the disposition by the LO Manager. When confidentiality restrictions apply to the reasons for rejection, the applicants are informed of this fact and the reasons are not disclosed.</p> <p>Note: Non-approval can occur at any time during the home study process.</p> <p>22. Document in the applicant's adoption home record the reasons given during the interview for the application not being approved, when the disposition is rejection.</p> <p>23. Send a Non-approval for Adoption Care letter, CP&P Form 14-200, within one week of the interview if application is not approved, citing the reasons based upon adoption home standards, and giving the applicants notice of the opportunity to request a review of the disposition by the LO Manager.</p>
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**Procedures Related to Adoption Home Study Packet for the Central Adoption Unit
12-22-2003**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Homefinding Supervisor	<p>1. When an adoptive home is approved, pull from the adoption home study record the following:</p> <p>a. Adoptive Home Summary Outline, CP&P Form 14-198a;</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. CP&P Form 14-198 - Modules II, III, IV and autobiography of each applicant and, when appropriate their children; c. Application for Adoption, CP&P Form 14-91; d. Type of Child Acceptable, CP&P Form 14-128; e. Financial Information on Adoptive Applicants, CP&P Form 14-4, if not completed as part of CP&P Form 14-198, Module II, page 6; f. Adult's Medical Report, CP&P Form 14-87; g. Child's Medical Report, CP&P Form 14-196; h. Adoption Information Release, CP&P Form 14-131; and i. Picture. <p>2. Attach all material to adoption home record and give to clerical.</p>
Clerical Home Finder	<p>3. Make designated number of copies of adoption home study material as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Three copies of the Adoptive Home Summary Outline, CP&P Form 14-198a; b. One copy of each applicant's Modules II, III, IV of the Adoptive Home Study, CP&P Form 14-198, and their autobiography; c. Three copies of the Application for Adoption, CP&P Form 14-91; d. Three copies of Type of Child Acceptable, CP&P Form 14-128; e. Three copies of Financial

	<p>Information on Adoptive Applicants, CP&P Form 14-4, if appropriate;</p> <p>f. Three copies of Adult's Medical Report, CP&P Form 14-87;</p> <p>g. Three copies of Child's Medical Report, CP&P Form 14-196;</p> <p>h. One copy of Adoption Information Release, CP&P Form 14-131.</p> <p>4. Make three packets of adoption home study material, 1 a.-h. Note: Original and two copies of each item is sent to Central Office (ASU). Third copy of each item is retained for the adoption home record, except the CP&P Form 14-91, Application for Adoption. The original is retained.</p> <p>5. Type Central Office (ASU) cover memo.</p> <p>6. Type Adoption Home Approval Letter, CP&P Form 14-199.</p> <p>7. Give completed adoption home study packets to Home finding Supervisor.</p>
Homefinding Supervisor	<p>8. Review adoption home study packets.</p> <p>9. Initial Central Office (ASU) cover memo.</p> <p>10. Send three adoption home study packets to Central Office (ASU).</p> <p>11. Sign Adoption Home Approval Letter, CP&P Form 14-199, and send to the applicants.</p> <p>12. Return adoption home record to Home Finder or clerical.</p>
Home Finder Clerical	<p>13. File adoption home record in designated file drawer.</p>

Re-evaluation 6-26-91

Re-evaluation of an adoptive applicant is completed when an approved adoptive home study is one year old, and yearly thereafter. Information on an approved adoptive family should be reasonably current or updated at the time a selected child is placed in that home. A re-evaluation includes the following:

- Employment Reference, CP&P Form [5-24](#), current within one year if there has been an employment change since the original home study;
- School/Day Care Reference, CP&P Form [5-2e](#), for each child in the household - current for the child's grade;
- Criminal history forms for all individuals 18 years of age or older now living in the household and not previously printed;
- A current local police check (where available);
- Child's Medical Report, CP&P Form [14-196](#), current within one year, for each child added to the household since the original home study. Health of any other child may be verified by a statement from the family physician that is current within one year;
- Adult's Medical Report, CP&P Form [14-87](#), current within one year, for any adult added to the household since the original home study. Health of any other adult may be verified by a statement from the family physician current within one year;
- Statement from a treating physician regarding special conditions (physical, mental, substance abuse), including a statement regarding the prognosis of that condition for any household member diagnosed or treated for a condition since the original home study;
- A new Checklist of Standards for Selected Adoptive Homes, CP&P Form [14-201](#), if the family has moved since the original home study;
- A new Type of Child Acceptable, CP&P Form [14-128](#), if there are significant changes since the original home study;
- A copy of the Adoption Home Re-evaluation, CP&P Form [14-204](#), Parts A and B, current within one year;

- Verification of any divorce/dissolution of civil union action if the adult members have separated since the original home study and one parent chooses to continue with the adoption application;
- A report from the appropriate supervising agency if a child has been placed for adoption with the family by another source since the original CP&P home study; and
- A report from the LO if the home is an active resource family home.

Waiting families are advised of the disposition of the Adoption Home Re-evaluation pursuant to the policy outlined in Adoption Home Study Dispositions.

Requests by Adoptive Parents to Receive or Review Their Home Study 5-28-2013

Periodically, licensed adoptive parents request a copy of their Home Study, or the opportunity to review it. A copy of the Home Study, as originally completed by the Resource Family Support Unit and the Office of Licensing, shall be provided.

Reference letters and the psycho-social inventory are not shared. A statement, summarizing the results of each reference, is provided.

Retention of Adoption Home Abuse/neglect Incident Reports 5-28-2013

Documentation of an abuse/neglect investigation in an adoption home is retained in the adoption home record. A report is also filed in the case record of each child involved in the incident residing in the adoption home at the time of the investigation. Information associated with each incident is entered into NJ SPIRIT (NJS).

Reports associated with abuse/neglect investigations determined to be “Substantiated” or “Established” are always retained in CP&P files rather than expunged. A request to expunge an “Unfounded” report is subject to review, however, upon request of the adoptive parent (see [CP&P-III-E-2-100](#))

Records associated with investigations found to be “Not Established,” a finding determination used by CP&P for CPS reports received on or after April 1, 2013, are **not** subject to expunction.

Records associated with investigations found to be “Not Substantiated,” a finding determination used by CP&P for CPS reports received prior to April 1, 2005, are **not** subject to expunction.

Expunction of Unfounded Incident Reports from DCF Files Considered on a Case-by-Case Basis 4-5-2010

See [CP&P-III-E-2-100](#).